

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) yesterday sent a letter to Senate and House conferees on the 2010 Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Bill urging them to maintain the \$100 million for Youth Mentor Grants within the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention that passed in the Senate version of the legislation. These funds are critical to providing support to proven national, regional and local mentoring programs. Forty-eight other Members joined Congresswoman Moore in signing the letter.

“President Obama has taken extraordinary steps calling our citizens to service, and since January, mentoring organizations across the country have seen a significant rise in volunteer applications,” the letter reads. “In the U.S. today, 17.6 million young people – nearly half the youth population – want or need mentors to help them reach their full potential, and nearly 44 million adults say they are willing to become mentors. Yet, due to funding limitations, only a fraction of these children are actually provided the caring adult relationships that could change their lives for the better.”

Many studies have shown that mentoring has a positive influence on young people’s lives. A 2007 study of Big Brothers Big Sisters’ school-based mentoring programs found that mentored youth made substantial improvements in academic performance and confidence. They also skipped school less than their non-mentored peers. In partnership with the Department of Justice, mentoring programs provide distressed communities with the ability to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization, especially during challenging economic times. The success of these programs demonstrates why they need continued support.

Organizations that develop, implement or expand local mentoring programs leading to measurable positive outcomes for youth will be able to apply for these grants. The House of Representatives-passed version of the CJS appropriations bill included \$80 million for Youth Mentoring Grants -- \$20 million less than the Senate bill. The Recovery Act, which passed in February, also contained funds for Youth Mentoring Grants.

Organizations that support this effort include Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club of America, Police Athletic League, Collaboration for Youth, Coalition for Community Schools, YMCA, Cal Ripken Foundation, MENTOR, World Fit for Kids and Youth Build.

###